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CONFERENCE OF MILITIA LEADERS IN
COMMUNIST CHINA

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CONFERENCE OF MILITIA LEADERS IN COMMUNIST CHINA

The following is the full translation of an article entitled, "Nihon Ashide Aruku Chugoku Kokubo", (Communist China's Defense Advances on Two Legs), written by Michio Iwamura appearing in Ajia Keizai Junpo (Asian Economic Thrice-Monthly Report), Tokyo, No. 432, 20 May 1960, pages 1-7.

1. Conference of Militia Leaders

A meeting of leaders of militia organizations throughout Communist China was held in Peiping during the ten-day period between 18 April and 27 April 1960. Although the militia in China has a long history as an auxiliary force for the People's Liberation Force, it is the first time that we have heard of a meeting of leaders of the militia organizations throughout the nation. A national conference of Militia Leaders had not been held prior to this conference probably because the original purpose of the militia force was to cooperate with regular troops in various localities without giving up its members' normal life. Admittedly it has not been said that the conference was the first of its kind in the history of Communist China, but Marshal Lo Jung-huan, in his opening address for the conference stated:

"A National Conference of Militia Leaders such as we have today is held not only for the first time in the ten year long history of the Republic, but also for the first time in the whole history of the Chinese Revolution."

He went on to state, "this conference testified to the fact that we are entering a new phase in the movement to organize militia and the victorious fruition of the thoughts of Chairman Mao on military affairs."

It is a well known fact that the Chinese militia was born at the time when the Chinese Communists had established their stronghold in Kwangsi and started to build its army, and that it had played an important role in the war against Japan and subsequently in the revolutionary war. At the 7th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party held in 1945, Mao Tse-tung reported that the number of the people's liberation force had reached 910,000, while the number of militia members was more than 2.2 millions.

There was no discernible trend toward organizing a militia during the period immediately following the establishment of the government of the Chinese People's Republic, but a mass movement for consolidation and expansion of the militia started in the wake of the commencement of communalization and the development of incidents in the Formosa Straits. As results, large militia forces were organized in various parts of the country, and it was reported in December 1959 that there were militia forces of 5 million members in Szechwan, 7 million in Hopei, and 15 million in Shantung. From the appearance of terms such as militia division and militia corps in newspapers, we could guess that the militia forces were organized on a large scale and have been placed on a regular basis.

However, the Jen-min Jih-pao articles on the Conference of Militia Leaders do not reveal the size of the militia force in China, the channels of command, and the amount of arms in possession of the militia.

We conjecture that the basic unit of the militia force is a People's Commune because growth in the militia had coincided with the launching of communes. We know that a militia division has a command staff, but in view of the nature of the militia it seems unlikely that there is a national command staff. It is our view that the armament department of the management committee of a People's Commune is exercising routine control over militia units with the cooperation of units of the People's Liberation Army in their vicinity. We conjecture that each comparatively large enterprise in urban areas has a militia division with a hierarchy of battalions, companies, and squads. There would be a chief of staff and political commissioners in a militia division; militia units of various levels are under the control of the regular army, and ultimately under the leadership of the appropriate party committees. Militia units are ultimately under the supervision of party committees of various levels because the militia has developed not as a substructure of the People's Liberation Army but as a voluntary mass organization. The Conference of Militia Leaders under discussion was called jointly by the Party Central Committee and the State Council.

2. "National Defense Walks on Two Legs"

At the Conference of Militia Leaders, experiences on militia activities were exchanged, and it was decided to continue to strengthen the militia. However, these activities are not aimed solely at strengthening militaristic organizations.

In the midst of the tension caused by the Formosa crisis two years ago, Mao Tse-tung stressed the need for

expanding the militia on a large scale. He stated: "Organizing the militia means organizing military, labor, educational, and athletic activities." Since then militia activities have been governed by this instruction. No matter how broad the purpose of the militia may be, it is obvious that the development of the militia will contribute to military power, and in cooperation with the regular army it will be able to carry on the motto, "walk on two legs," in the military field.

It is needless to say that militia members are taking military training since it is a militaristic organization. They receive training not only in marksmanship but also in the techniques of naval and anti-aircraft operations. There are excellent marksmen and anti-aircraft artillery crews among members of militia. (27 April 1960, Jen-min Jih-pao). However, reports on the proceedings of the conference of the militia do not introduce us to this aspect of the activities of the militia. The majority of militia members are not assuming military duties, and have no combat experience. Exceptionally, militia members in Fukien and Kwangtung ---- which are just across Formosa Strait from Formosa now in the hands of the Chiang Kai-shek regime -- have taken part in actual combat in cooperation with the regular army.

According to a statement made by the representative of the militia forces on the Fukien front, during the past few years, hundreds of thousands members of the militia in Fukien took part in a total of 15,000 actions with the regular army, and in 11,900 actions independently. During the invasion of Tung-shan Tao by the Chiang forces, 300 Nationalist paratroopers were dropped in an attempt to cut off the reinforcements. But, the majority of the troops were wiped out by militia units. Also, when the People's Liberation Army bombarded Quemoy Island in 1958, militia members played an important role in preparing bridges and transporting military goods.

A large number of fishermen along the coast of Chekiang have been organized into militia, and have been fighting against guerrilla activities of the Chiang Kai-shek forces. The militia corps in Ting-hai Hsien took part in 141 actions against enemy forces, killing and injuring 12, taking 12 prisoners, and capturing 11 vessels, 4 light machine guns, and 29 rifles. Militia units under the People's Commune in Sui-an Hsien in Chekiung have been engaged in shore patrol.

In communities not on the coast, militia forces are trying to capture spies sent by the Chiang regime. In 1958, the Chiang regime dropped three spies on Shih-wan-ta shun in Kwangsi, but all of them were captured within 24 hours in a joint militia and regular army operation.

It seems that this type of militia activity is not aimed at attaining any immediate results, but at developing a resistance force in case of invasion by the Chiang forces. In connection with this problem, Marshal Ho Lung on behalf of the State Council stated as follows at a first day's meeting of the National Conference of Militia Leaders:

"Along with the modernization of the People's Liberation Army, we must strengthen the militia in order to prevent invasion by Imperialist forces. If the Imperialists should dare to attack us, we must drown them in the sea of our militia."

A nation may drop bombs but not invade the country which has -- if it should have -- 100,000 militia members possessing military knowledge and training. The great importance of the militia lies in its potentiality as a defensive force. Thus, defense power may be maintained even with a reduced regular army.

3. Is China Being Invaded?

It is needless to point out that the activities and expansion of the militia in Communist China are being carried out with the awareness of the threat of invasion from outside. Why is it that Communist China takes so seriously the threat of invasion? This question was answered in the concluding speech at the Conference of Militia Leaders made by Defense Minister Lin Pao. Speaking of the current situation, Lin Pao said: "At present, the internal situation is extremely good. The general conditions of the world shows that East Wind is continuously overwhelming the West Wind; conditions are gradually developing in favor of world peace and the socialist camp." Pointing out that "the signs of moderation in American imperialism do not mean any change in the basic policies of America," he went on to say:

"American Imperialists are still dominating Formosa which is part of our territory; since October 1959, American Imperialists violated our territorial waters and sky for 21 times; and on 14 March 1960, American troops numbering 50,000 and Chiang's forces staged large scale maneuvers on the Formosa Strait."

He also stated, "against these, we must maintain a high degree of vigilance."

To a Japanese his statement may sound an excessively exaggerated warning, but it is not hard to imagine how seriously the government and people of Communist China will take the joint maneuvers of the American and Nationalist forces in the Formosa Strait. In the "battle field" called

the Formosa Strait, there is no such thing as a defense line. A movement of American forces in the Formosa Strait means a violation of the territorial land, sky and waters of Communist China.

The downing of an American U-2 plane over the Soviet sky has created a big international problem, but if Communist China had shot down by rockets American planes which have invaded the continent, the number of incidents will be enormous. At present, Communist China does not shoot down American planes, but has instead strongly protested against the intrusions through its Foreign Ministry spokesman. The number of protests which were filed between the time of the crisis on the Formosa Strait and 21 March 1960 is 93. It is natural that the Communists are maintaining a strong vigilance in view of the fact that spies are dropped from planes even in a place like Kwangsi as we mentioned in the course of reviewing the activities of the militia. From the same point of view, Communist China is strongly opposed to a Japanese-American Security Pact.

In this connection, we recall a passage from a statement issued by Foreign Minister Chen Yi on 19 November 1959 shortly after the initiation of negotiations for the renewal of the security pact. The passage follows:

"The Chinese people are suffering from an American invasion. The criminal activities of the Japanese Imperialists are still vivid in the minds of the Chinese people. The Chinese government and people cannot help expressing a great concern and an extreme sense of indignation at the hostile schemes against the Chinese people by the Kishi government in Japan in collaboration with the U. S."

The Japanese people are afraid of being involved in the future in a war promoted by America as a result of the proposed Japanese-American security pact.

However, for the Chinese, it is not a problem of the future, as they are now being invaded by America and receiving constant military threats. Such a Far Eastern policy of America and alliance with Japan lead the Chinese to express "grave concern and extreme sense of indignation." The strengthening of the militia in China is being conducted under these circumstances.

Marshal Ho Lung, in the statement referred to earlier, said:

"In view of the facts that the American Imperialists are controlling Formosa, expanding their military bases around us, and actively supporting the revival of the Japanese milit-

arism, we cannot positively relax our vigilance and defense preparations."

We must not fail to see that in the sense indicated above, the national conference of militia leaders shows one of the counter measures taken by China against the proposed Japanese American security pact.

4. Responsibility of Militia to Produce

The expansion of militia forces indicates the Chinese defense policy standing on two legs. But, the militia itself is a multi dimensional organization which has not only two legs, but three and perhaps four legs.

General Lo Jui-hsiung, Chief of Staff of the People's Liberation Army, spoke on the first day of the Conference, on the subject, "Report on Certain Problems of Organizing Militia Forces." In the statement, he pointed out:

"Building and protecting socialism are the two glorious tasks imposed on every member of the militia."

He further stated:

"During the period of building peace, the basic responsibility of militia members is to arouse the revolutionary spirit and to promote actively the national economy."

Judging from these statements, the National Conference of Militia Leaders was not addressed solely to military problems but also to economic matters. For example, Deputy Premier Po I-po, in reporting at the 24 April meeting of the Conference on the need for mobilizing the masses of people to bring about a technological revolution called upon the militia members to:

"to become fighters defending the fatherland and its economy, and in the economic front, to become active elements in bringing about technological reform and renovation."

Militia leaders from many parts of China reported on their experiences in the field of production. Many delegates attending the Conference pointed out that the organization of militia forces has increased the efficiency of production by improving the political awareness, the attitude toward organized life, and the sense of respect for an orderly life on the part of workers and farmers.

A delegate from a militia attached to the Tung-Lin Coal Mine in Kweichow reported that workers in his militia have developed the spirit of the working class, showed high rate of attendance at work, and increased their productivity as a result of their participation in the militia force, although they were originally from farming communities. It

was reported that in a steel refinery in Szechwan province, the leader of militia in the refinery climbed up on top of a blast furnace to repair damage caused by an explosion. In addition to these stories, there were many reports about militia members who had contributed to production by taking the initiative.

The militia organization is extended to various aspects of the social life of the Chinese; there have been reports about their activities in the fields of education, sanitation, and sports.

Delegates from the militia unit in Liaoning University reported that the members of the militia unit in the Department of Mathematics in his university have decided to "adopt a combat posture in studying sciences", whereby the Department organized 143 combat squads and visited more than 70 factories and enterprises in Mukden and An-shun helping with their programs of "mechanization, semi-mechanization, automation, and semi-automation." In collaboration with workers and technicians, they conducted 2,847 scientific research projects, thereby completing the 1960 Scientific Research Plans 10 months ahead of the schedule.

Under the slogan, "build a strong physique and defend the fatherland," the organization of the militia has raised the athletic standards in many sports. The Siam Railway Academy, for example, had no one who won athletic grades set up the State prior to the organization of the militia, but thereafter as many as 200 students won grades last year.

The level of athletic activities at Tsing-hun College has also been raised since the inception of militia and the College won two victories at the First National Athletic Meet.

As an example of the many programs carried on the militia, it was reported that 13,000 female members of militia units in Fukien province had built in 20 months a dam called, "the Fair Ladies' Dam," which can hold 40 million cubic kilometers of water, more than the famous "13 Hill Dam" in Peiping.

When the proposal for the construction of the dam in Hui-an Hsien was made in June 1958, women responded first, and organized November, 1958 a women's militia comprising 13,000 members. They completed the dam in February 1960 after overcoming numerous difficulties by means of a high degree of organization and systematic approaches (Jen-min Jih-pao, 27 April 1960).

When one considers this aspect of the National Conference of Militia Leaders, one might get the impression that it was not a meeting of delegates of militia units but a conference of progressive producers. It seems fairly

certain that the majority of delegates who participated in the conference were progressive producers. They came merely as delegates of militia units this time.

The phrase, "Everyone is a soldier," had a bad connotation to a Japanese as it smacks of the old catchword, "Every subject is a soldier." However, the Chinese catchword, "Everyone is a soldier" must be taken to mean that everyone is a soldier in the sense that he builds, promotes, and protects the national economy.

We can understand the peaceful policy underlying the policy of "walking on two legs" when we realize that defense expenditures have been increased and the size of the regular army has been reduced in spite of tense foreign relations.

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